schools. Children are pretty smart people, a lot smarter than some of us give them credit for. They know the difference between phonies and real folks who really mean what they say and say what they mean.

When they ride by a brand new $22 and $23 million prison to go to a rundown school building, one that the wind blows through in the wintertime, with no air conditioning, they do not have the books that they need nor the technology they ought to have, they can figure out right quick what is important in their community.

My colleagues and I have been working hard to make sure that we can focus in on these issues, because we do value education, because we know that lifetime learning or lifelong learning is the key to the American dream, not only for the middle class, but to allow people to move up into the middle class.

Education is the one thing in our society that allows people the opportunity to move up. I say it is great. It is the thing that levels the playing field. No matter what your ethnic or economic background, with a good education, you have a chance.

Certainly in today's global economy, America's international competitiveness is absolutely dependent on our people's ability to perform knowledge-based jobs. These are the kinds of jobs that produce the best jobs, the best goods. We provide the best goods and services in the world, there is no question about that. But if we are going to remain a world leader, we have to make sure our education lives up to those same standards.

In the new economy of this Information Age, what people can earn absolutely depends on what they learn and what they can continue to learn in their lifelong learning processes.

We have been trying to get Congress to give higher priority to strengthen our neighborhood schools, our neighborhood public schools, and demonstrate how much we value public education for our children. But, unfortunately, I must say that the House Republican leadership has pushed through Congress a number of very large tax bills.

Let me tell the Members what the challenge of that is. I am in favor of targeted tax cuts. I think we ought to have them, but we ought to decide what our priorities are and put a balance on it, because if we do those first there will be no money for education for our children when the time comes.

It is not right to leave our children behind and deny them the kind of educational investment that they need to make sure we have a world class education. We cannot do it without an investment. The last time I checked, computers cost money, new schools cost money, quality education and paying teachers and keeping good people in the classroom costs money.

No business in their right mind would put their businesses in some of the buildings we ask our children to go to school in today. Yet, we say we want quality education. We all want it. We ought to have the courage to make sure our elected leaders live up to the commitment, and not let them get away with just talking about it. I strongly oppose these kinds of misguided priorities.

I am pleased this evening to have joining with me my colleague, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), who is certainly a leader in education, who has worked hard in a number of areas. She is making sure that education is available to all children in the public sector, making that a priority.

I am pleased to yield to my friend, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), for her comments.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Chairman, it is great to be here tonight. My dear friend, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), has been an excellent leader in education, not only in this Congress but throughout the Nation for many years, and we value his advice and his leadership on the issues that are so important to parents and to this Nation, given the need for educational opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I stand here to discuss the importance of technology in education. We have talked about the digital divide and how the gap has widened between those who have and those who have not, and especially among urban areas as well as rural areas of our children who have not had the opportunities to advance in this highly technological environment.

We have a great deal at stake when it comes to the technological literacy of this Nation's teachers and students. A strong work force and a strong economy depend upon the quality of our schools, the preparedness of our teachers, and the ability of our students to compete in an increasingly technical world.

The ability to use computer technology has become indispensable to educational, career, social, and cultural advancement. In the new millenium, technological literacy has not become only a basic requirement but a life skill as well.

It is then imperative that students are equipped with technology skills at an early stage in life by teachers who are skillfully trained to integrate technology in their curriculum and classroom learning environment.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Internet access in public schools has increased from 35 percent to 95 percent, and classroom connections have increased from 3 percent to 63 percent from 1994 to 1999.

While these increases indicate positive responses to the need for technology in the classroom, we must be cognizant of how efficiently and effectively this technology is being used.

According to the President's 1997 Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology, a ratio of four to five students per computer represents a reasonable level for the effective use of computers within schools.

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In my district, however, Mr. Speaker, the ratios are much higher. In the city of Compton, the ratio is 18 students per computer. In the city of Lynwood, the ratio is nine students per computer. In Long Beach, the ratio is eight students per computer.

Considering the socioeconomic demographics of my district, these numbers are just not acceptable. The children in my district and insular districts across the country are falling behind, and something must be done to stop it. Equipping our schools with technology is the first step in fulfilling the challenge to promote technological literacy in our schools.

Another real challenge lies in feeling the vast training gap and in providing trained teachers who can incorporate computer technology in all aspects of the learning experience.

A study by the National Center for Education statistics found that only one teacher in five felt very prepared to integrate technology in the subject they taught. This fact is not surprising when, according to a study by the Milken Exchange on Education Technology, teachers on average receive less than 13 hours of technology training per year, and 40 percent of all teachers have never received any technology training. That is really a travesty.

In addition to that, teachers receive far less technology curriculum integration training than basic computer skills training. Forty-two percent of teachers have had 6 or more hours of basic skills training within the past year, compared with just 29 percent of teachers who had an equal amount of curriculum integration training.

Yet, research shows that training on integrating technology into education programs has a greater impact on teachers than basic technology skills training. Clearly, the key to successfully integrating technology into the classroom will not be in installing more hardware or software, or wiring schools to the Internet, the key will be training teachers to be integrators.

Now is the time for action. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that, by the end of the year 2000, some 60 percent of jobs will require proficiencies in the use of a broad range of information technologies. By the year 2005, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there will be growth of 70 percent of technology-related jobs.

This issue, however, is not focused solely on preparing students to assume the jobs of the future. More important is the need to prepare students for America's life and culture, both of which will be influenced heavily by technology.

In order to produce a citizenry ready to accept upcoming technological challenges, we must be willing to make a